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May 1 2003

Mr Menachem Rosensaft
Holocaust Survivor Memories Project
World Jewish Congress
501 Madison Avenue
New-york, N.Y. 10022

Dear Mr. Rosensaft

As a Holocaust survivor, I was fortunate to survive, with my parents and siblings, by fighting back at the Nazis. Many of our Jewish people were unable to escape death or mistreatment in the camps or other nazi location. Our actions helped us survive, except for my brother who fell in combat in the French Resistance (French Forces of the Interior, F.F.I)

I believe the story of the Loewy family, including how my father was able to rescue about 1500 Jewish people from a French concentration camp at Agde (Herauld) needs to be told, as well as how we survived, fought back, helped victims of the Nazis get back on their feet, and how, arriving in the USA, my father initiated and organized both a Phoenix Jewish FreeLoan Association in Arizona, and a Jewish Congregation, Beth Hebre (then Beth Hebrew), also in Phoenix.

I will give you a few highlights to start, documents and pictures from which you can judge if this story needs not only to be recorded, but also, possibly printed in a book.

This is basically a summary, with a lot of details available, if you are interested.

At the start of the war, my father, Elias Loewy was 48 years of age, and volunteered for the civilian defense in Colmar (Alsace), where he was immediately promoted to chef of a decontamination post, in case the Germans were going to use war gases. We walked away on foot, when the Germans crashed thru the Vosges mountains of eastern France, coming thru Belgium. I will skip details here. We wound up in Toulouse, were arrested by order of the governor (Prefet), along with other foreign refugees who came to France after 1936 (Vichy ordinance), although we lived in France since 1926. This was arbitrary, but the Prefet had latitude in his actions.

We were transferred to the camp of Agde (Herauld). After a few days of poor treatment , my father asked for and received a pass to go see the Prefet in Montpellier, both him and my sister Erna. There, in the hallway, he encountered an ex-business partner of his, Camille Ernst, who now was the Secretaire General, the second in charge after the Prefet, in charge also of the police. After Ernst recognized my father, he asked him what he was doing there. After my father told him we were in the Agde camp, Ernst told him: You are free. He signed a release order for the family, then asked: do you know anybody else in this situation, my father rember a few families, and Ernst immediately put them on the release order, for a total of about 35 or 36 people, including us five.

Then he told my father to remain in the village of Agde, adjacent to the camp, and to get people out of the camp. How can I do this, my father asked? "If they came to France prior to 1936, and prove they have sufficient resources to live on their own means outside of the camp, (at least for a year, I believe) and not at the charge of the government, I will release them. (see attachment # 16).

My father said: if people have no money, don't they also have a right to be free? Ernst answered: "You will find a way". He had full confidence in my father's intelligence and dedication.

My father arranged with the people qualified for release, to lend the money to those without funds, with return of the money upon the release of these victims. This worked well for awhile, until Ernst told my father that someone in the prefecture has gotten suspicious, and noted down the serial numbers.

Then we became "money changers", in banks, grocery stores etc... and about 1500 people were released. Meanwhile, my mother, Berthe and father Elias, as well as my sister Erna, my brother Max and I received permits to enter all three camps of Agde (for men, women and foreign soldiers, primarily Czechs) every day, for 11 hours, from 8:00 am to 19:00 (7:00 PM), to bring in food, clothing or whatever we could find or buy or collect for the internees.

Camille Ernst had his people regularize the residency authorizations of the released people. Now these were all Jewish people. Ernst had great respect and friendship for my father, and I am sure this contributed to his desire to release the internees.

This release operation stopped when the internees were transferred to another camp, Rivesaltes, which was near the Pyrenees, out of the authority of Camille Ernst.

In August-September 1942, the Vichy government ordered the arrest of foreign Jews, for internment and deportation to the then "Occupied Zone". Vichy was in the unoccupied zone. My father located empty houses, or people willing to hide the persecuted, placed many in hospitals (food was available, doctors co-operated in hiding people there) and he organized a feeding service, working with a Jewish Boy-Scout troop, collecting food from private people and / Jewish restaurant. The food was delivered only every second or third day, to avoid suspicion of the neighbors and reporting to the authorities.

When the US troops landed in Nord Africa, on November 8 1942, the Germans invaded Southern France on November 11 1942. It was time for us to disappear under a false name (Heiberger). It sounded both French and Alsatian, because my parents did not speak French, and being considered as Alsaticans would explain that.

The forged I.D cards were picked-up at a Catholic house of priests, as Ernst did not trust people at the Prefecture and wanted avoid any direct contact with hunted people. Contact was later establish through a mail-drop, in the Library Catholique in Montpellier.

Rather than going in further details at this time, what followed was we disappeared in the Lozere mountains, under the false name Heiberger, had to work very hard as wood cutters, my father and I, cutting down 12 trees a day, as a team, de-branch them, then remove the bark, sleep in a barn above (smelling) sheep, to get a little bit of money to buy our meager food rations for the family, as we had already run out of money.

Later, my brother Max and I joined the Resistance, in early May 1943, with very little food available, worn out clothing and shoes, unarmed and hunted by the Nazis. When the Nazis ordered the French people to turn in their weapons and ammunitions into city halls, we finally seized a chance to break in and remove the weapons (with the complicity of the local city officials). Now they felt what we had for a long time: the Nazis were after them too, to be sent for forced labor into Germany.

Briefly:

We got a Jedburgh team parachuted into the Lozere, with some more weapons (German, Italian and Russian), were in the first group of commandos trained by Captain Aaron Bank, a member of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services), came down from the mountains of Lozere to the plains of the Gard department, got into combats of Liberation, as described in individual attachment.

My brother got killed when our 120 men company attacked and stopped a Germano-Russian column of 1000 Germans and 2000 Russians, on August 27 1944, at Saint Just et Vacquieres, (Gard). We fought them for about 7 hours, were forced to retreat to avoid encirclement, after 2 planes, called in by captain Bank machine-gunned the column, easing the pressure placed on us by the Nazis. During the night, 300 Russians hid, and surrendered to us in the morning.

My brother was buried the next day, but his body was moved in October to the Jewish Cemetery in Montpellier. A Polish Jewish officer, who could not speak French, had Organized the corps-franc "Leon". In August 1944 he used the nom de guerre "Bolivar". He was later put in charge of foreign deserters of the German army (mostly Poles and some Czechs). He provided an honor guard of Polish soldiers at the re-burial of my brother Max.

The family returned to liberated Montpellier, in September 1944. My father was appointed directeur general of Jewish Organizations for 5 states (departments, in France) in the area around and including the state of Herault (capital: Montpellier).

I was now in the regular French Army, interpreter of General Henri Zeller, who later became military governor of Paris, then chief of staff of the French Army. He had me once translate his speech to about 1200 German officers, at the P.O.W camp of the Larzac, in the state of Aveyron (without any amplification system)..

Going back to my father, Elias:

He was charged with providing assistance any way possible to people returning from the nazi concentration camps. He decided that he was not going along giving them a small

monthly subsistence, too small to live on, too much to die on. He was able to provide sums equal to about one or two years in advance, to permit those with a trade or profession to try to get them back on their feet, buy tools of their trade or merchandise, as independent and self-respecting people.

This is where his experience came in handy, when he organized the Jewish Free Loan Association in Phoenix, Arizona, early in the 1950's. He also undertook organizing a new congregation (first as an orthodox one), and became its first president.

When he passed away in 1954, in Phoenix, his friend, a Reformed Rabbi, Abraham Lincoln Krohn, from Temple Beth Israel accepted becoming a President of an Orthodox Congregation, when I, a member of the nominating Committee suggested him, and he accepted. Rabbi Krohn stated that he was going to try to construct the new building of the Congregation, along the plans of my late father. He raised the funds, and the new building was completed.

At the Camp of Larzac, I interrogated there the German Major Egon Keutman, an adjutant of Marshall Goering. When asked how old he was, 29 years of age, how come he had such a high rank at such a young age? he replied: I was on "Spezial Einsatz" (special assignment). When I asked him what this meant, he replied: I was in charge of securing the rear of the German Army, in Russia, meaning preventing guerrilla attacks. I am still wondering what his assignment was, and how he performed it.

Later, in early 1945, before the end of the war, in addition to my responsibilities as translator for General Henri Zeller (he had a brother, Andre Marie Zeller, in Algeria), I was put in charge as director of the mapping Department, simultaneously also in charge of military intelligence on 1 third of Spain (Madrid and Barcelona sectors), AS General

Franco was an ally of Hitler, and we did not trust him to hit France in the back, thru the Pyrenees mountains. Finally, I was also appointed head of the Service Historique of the division, but shortly thereafter asked for my discharge and the family came to the USA in June 1946.

There are many more details and events, such as when my father was approached by an American medical officer who had rescued a young Jewish boy from the camp of Flossenbug and wanted to adopt him. The colonel was to be transferred to the Pacific theater of operation, and asked my father to take over, meanwhile, which he did.

My father and my sister made arrangements with the American consulate in Marseille for visa and a ship card. When this was completed, the consul, Herve L'Heureux asked my sister: Don't you want to go to the US, too? She replied: It would take too many years, because of our different countries of birth.

He told her to send it our papers. In less than one month, we received our visas. We had now to get ship transportations, or the visas would expire. Luckily, I found out that the French Department of Defense had a number of openings on ships returning to the USA, and since I was an ex-FFI, we were entitled to the reservations.

Attached are the following documents and translations:

- 1) Max Loewy citation to the order of the Army (item # 8)
- 2) Fred Loewy citation to the order of the Division, (item # 9)
Fred being decorated in Montpellier by colonel Weil (who, afterwards, pinched my cheek and said "Mazel-Tov) (item # 9)
- 3) Service de Coordination des Oeuvres Sociales Israelites (item # 16)
- 4) Camp d'Agde entrance permit, every day, from 8:00 Am to 19:00 hrs (7:00 pm) for all 3 camps of Agde. (I, II, III).

Our participation in combats have been reported or referred to in a series of 10 articles in a newspaper in Ales, Gard, the "Midi Libre".

In the books:

Liberation de Saint Christol (cover, with extracts, item 1)
Cevennes, terre de refuge (excerpt # 5)
Demain, du sang noir (item # 10 (extracts only)
L'Odysee de la 32eme CFL (item # 11)
Quand le Gard Resistait (item # 13)
Colonel Aaron BANK (item # 15)
Motorola publication: Microrave.

Enclosed are a few photos or informations

Fred with mother Berthe and sister Erna Loewy (now MOED)
Elias Loewy, president of Beth Hebre. (later, Beth Hebrew)

Other:

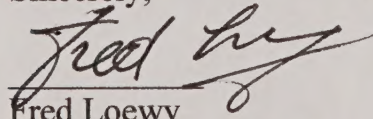
Jewish Free Loan Association. My father refused the presidency because he was not yet fluent in English, and accepted the vice-presidency.

I have additional pictures of the French Resistance, if interested.

Please let me know if the informations I have provided above and attached, may be of interest to you, and, if so, how do you plan on making use of it. Of course, I have the French books from which these informations came from.

Thank you,

Sincerely,



Fred Loewy
5658 W. Irma lane
Glendale, Az
85308

